



The Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

April 24, 2019

The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cortez Masto:

I appreciate the dialogue with you and our staffs regarding ongoing matters in Nevada. This letter builds upon the Department of Energy (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Administrator Lisa Gordon-Hagerty's response to you on February 14, 2019, which provided further detail on the shipment of one-half metric ton of plutonium from South Carolina to the National Nuclear Security Site (NNSS) in Nevada. It is my intention to continue our dialogue to find opportunities and work to overcome challenges as they arise.

Nevada has played – and will continue to play – a pivotal role in our Nation's nuclear deterrent. The work conducted at NNSS often uses plutonium and has for decades. Without plutonium research at NNSS, DOE/NNSA's ability to certify the safety, security, and effectiveness of the stockpile would be put at risk. Experiments conducted at NNSS are essential to maintaining the safety and reliability of the stockpile in the absence of underground nuclear testing. The Device Assembly Facility (DAF) is integral to supporting these experiments and staging these materials.

In support of this work, DOE/NNSA is committed to planned investments of about \$1 billion over the next six years to upgrade facilities at the Nevada site.

Pursuant to a U.S. District Court order, DOE/NNSA was required to remove one metric ton of plutonium from South Carolina by 2019. The Department completed its environmental analysis and technical review of potential locations in August 2018 and identified staging sites, including Texas, New Mexico, and Nevada. The one-half metric ton of weapons-grade plutonium that was shipped from South Carolina to Nevada before November 2018 is not nuclear waste; it is material essential for the maintenance of the U.S. weapons stockpile. However, given the concerns you and other members of the Nevada delegation have raised regarding this specific shipment, DOE commits to commencing removal of this material from Nevada beginning in calendar year 2021, and completing the removal by the end of 2026. Additionally, DOE will not ship the other one-half ton of plutonium from South Carolina to Nevada. Moreover, as I communicated to Congress on May 10, 2018, it is my intention to meet any future statutory requirements for plutonium removal from South Carolina by down blending the plutonium and shipping the diluted material directly from South Carolina to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico.



Thank you for accepting my invitation to visit NNSS. NNSA Administrator Lisa Gordon-Hagerty and I look forward to touring these facilities with you and your staff on May 10, 2019, to gain understanding and see firsthand the vital work carried out each day by the 3,000 dedicated Nevadans who perform research, training, and oversee management of our nuclear stockpile.

DOE/NNSA stands ready to continue this important dialogue and discuss these matters, including in classified settings as necessary. The relationship between DOE/NNSA and Nevada is of great importance, and I remain committed to open communication on NNSS' indispensable role in support of the United States' national security.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Perry". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Rick Perry